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RUEHZN/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE  
RHMFIU/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHINGTON DC  
RUEFHLC/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC  
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SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR, S/CT, INR, INL

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TAGS: PTER KISL PGOV KCRM TU GM

SUBJECT: TRIAL OF GERMAN PKK LEADER HUESEYIN ACAR BEING

REF: A. A) DUSSELDORF 10  
B. B) 2008 BERLIN 1694

¶1. (U) The trial of alleged Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) Germany leader Hueseyin Acar (aka Hueseyin Colak), began on April 27 in Duesseldorf, the latest in a series of high profile terrorism cases at the city's Higher Regional Court. German authorities have charged Acar (49) with leading an international terrorist organization and coercion, by threatening the life of a young Kurdish woman who had become pregnant by a PKK member in Stuttgart. The prosecution claimed that he threatened to kill her if she did not abort the pregnancy, a form of coercion reportedly common in the German PKK organization where punishment for illicit relationships could range from isolation to banishment to Iraq. The trial is scheduled to last until August, but could take longer.

¶2. (U) German authorities arrested Acar in July 2008 in Detmold in eastern North Rhine-Westphalia. The prosecution alleges that Acar performed management functions for the PKK in Germany, including finding financing for their activities, recruiting personnel, and managing the component parts of the organization.

Specifically, Acar is charged with directing a criminal organization (under section 129 of the German criminal code) and coercion (section 240). While he was leader, he allegedly had 400 PKK functionaries working under him in Germany. The prosecution claimed that young members of the PKK continue carrying out firebombing attacks in Germany, most recently in February in Wuppertal.

¶3. (U) When asked to state his ethnicity, Acar surprised the court by twice affirming that he is not Kurdish but Turkish. He gave a lengthy opening statement in which he claimed that the past 31 years of his life, since the December 1978 Maras Massacre in Turkey, had been a "psychological prison".

¶4. (U) The long statement came after defense attorneys challenged the trial venue, arguing that the Sixth Criminal Division of the Duesseldorf Higher Regional Court was too busy to properly hear the case. The Sixth Criminal Division created a special panel to hear this case, as the main group of judges, headed by Ottmar Breidling, was hearing the higher profile "Sauerland Cell" terrorism trial (reftel). The court did not rule on that motion. Acar faces a sentence of ten years in prison for membership in an international terrorist organization and between one and one half to five years in prison for the coercion charge.

¶15. (SBU) The prosecution of Acar is the latest in a string of court cases, arrests and investigations that German authorities are undertaking against the PKK and affiliated groups in response to heightened concerns over the activities of Germany-based PKK fund-raisers and supporters. Over the past year, law enforcement actions including extraditions, arrests, raids, and investigations of PKK-related groups have been used to disrupt the PKK's operations in Germany, to target the current and former leadership, and to shut down PKK-sympathetic media outlets (see ref B).

¶16. (U) This message was coordinated with Embassy Berlin.

BOYSE